growth in this new area are equitably distributed.

The Ministerial Declaration with which the Conference concluded has, in essentials, endorsed India's standpoint on the above issues.

Barriers imposed on the movement of skilled labourers by North America and Europe

2145. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some Indian services like software, consultancy are losing their edge in the global market due to protective and non-tariff barriers imposed on the movement of skilled labourers by North America and Europe;

(b) if so, details of representations if any received in this regard;

(c) the details of action initiated during 1996-97 and proposed during the 1998-99 to take up the issue of market access to movement of "natural persons" with WTO to ensure meaningful balance in market area benefits in the service sector; and

(d) the details of the action taken/ proposed for redressal of the issue at multilateral, regional and bilateral formus.

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (d) In the area of services, particularly Indian computer software exporters are facing non-tariff barriers in North American and European markets inter-alia by way of visa regulations which restrict and impose various conditions for the free movement of software personnel. The issue of better market access and denial/ delay in obtaining visas/work permits for Indian service providers is taken up bilaterally with the concerned countries as well as at appropriate international fora. Comprehensive round of Services negotiations under General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) in WTO is scheduled to begin in the year 2000. Enhanced market access through the mode of movement of natural persons shall also be part of these negotiations. The Government is preparing for these negotiations.

Assessment of export promotion schemes

2146. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that during the last four years, Government doled out Rs. 16,000 crore to exporters via export promotion schemes;

(b) if so, the details thereof and how much foreign exchange has been earned as a result thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that no mechanism has been set up to monitor the earning of foreign exchange on these schemes; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) Forgoing or refund of customs duties on the inputs required for the export products is inherent in the various export schemes. This is based on the universal principle that export goods should either not be subject to such duties in the first instance by granting duty exemptions; or the duties, if already paid, should be neutralised through the mechanism of refund/rebate, drawback, pass book credit, etc. Viewed in this context, it cannot be said that the Government has doled out huge amount of money to the exporters via the export promotion schemes.

(b) Various export schemes have played a very significant role in the country's export performance. It is however not possible to precisely quantity how much foreign exchange has been earned on account of the operation of different export schemes, since exports, and the foreign exchange earnings arising therefrom, are influenced by several

factors, including the export schemes. (During the last Four years the total exports value exceeds Rs. 5,00,000 crores).

(c) and (d) There has been a regular mechanism for monitoring export obligation which the exporters, operating under different export schemes, are subjected to. This indirectly takes care of monitoring of the earnings of foreign exchange under these schemes. Prior to 1.4.95, the requirement for submission of Bank Realisation Certificate (BRC) evidencing realisation of export proceeds was provided for under some of the export scheme like the advance licencing scheme, but the same was discontinued with effect from 1.4.95 in consideration of the fact that the Reserve Bank of India was already monitoring the realisation of export proceeds and it was felt that there was no need to duplicate this work. However, in the light of the observations made by the Public Accounts Committee in its 24th Report relating to Advance Licencing Scheme, the Government has now decided to reintroduce the requirement of production of BRC before redeeming advance licences w.e.f. 13.4.98. Likewise, in the case of Duty Exemption Pass Book (DEPB) Scheme, a condition has been put that the DEPB credit would be allowed to be transferred only after the proof of realisation of export proceeds is furnished by the exporter.

Consolidation of Export Promotion Scheme

2147. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are shaping all their present export promotion schemes into "one grand export promotion scheme" and also promises "Credit at attractive interest rates' and free port to boot" as reported in the Economic Times, dated the 19th June, 1998; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof indicating Government's proposed export targets during the current financial year?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) In response to the persistent demand of the exporters to provide a single attractive export scheme, free from procedural hassles, the Ministry of Commerce is presently studying the feasibility of such a scheme, which would also be compatible with WTO parameters.

(b) The details of the new scheme, shall be finalised in consultation with other concerned Ministries of the Government of India at the appropriate time.

Import of wheat from Australia

2148. SHRI M. VENKAIAHNAIDU: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Probe into 950 crore wheat deal ordered" that appeared in the Hindustan Times dated the 20th May, 1998;

(b) whether any progress has been made in this regard;

(c) the quantum of wheat which was to be imported from Australia and the contracted price thereof;

(d) the availability of wheat in the stock of Government and the requirement of wheat of the country when the deal was struck with Australia; and

(e) the circumstances which compelled Government to import the wheat?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) The Government have noted the New-item which appeared in the Hindustan Times dated 20th May, 1998. Captioned "Probe into 950 crore wheat deal ordered".